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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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E. O. 11652:NA
TAGS: PGOV PBOR UK EI
SUBJECT: GALLUP POLL ASSESSES NORTHERN IRELAND
SITUATION

SUMMARY: A GALLUP POLL TAKEN IN THE IRISH REPUBLIC DURING MARCH, BUT AS YET UNPUBLISHED, REAFFIRMS AN IRISH PREFERENCE FOR A LONG RUN SOLUTION BASED ON UK WITHDRAWAL AND UNIFICATION, BUT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE NORTH SHOULD DECIDE THE UNIFICATION QUESTION ITSELF BY REFERENDUM. VIEWS ON SHORT RUN PROSPECTS ARE LESS CONCLUSIVE, BUT PIRA VIOLENCE IS STRONGLY CONDEMNED. END SUMMARY.

1. METHODOLOGY. THE GALLUP POLL WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE BBC TV PROGRAM PANORAMA AND CONDUCTED IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND (BY IRISH MARKETING SURVEYS) MARCH 2- 9, 1978. 1295 ADULTS OVER 18 WERE INTERVIEWED. (A SIMILAR GROUP WAS INTERVIEWED IN MARCH IN BRITAIN, BUT THE RESULTS ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY.) FIRST SCHEDULED FOR RELEASE ON APRIL 24, THE BBC NOW EXPECTS TO DO SO MAY 8. WHERE POSSIBLE, THE FOLLOWING
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OUTLINE OF THE 1978 DATA FURNISHED US BY BBC IS COMPARED TO A SIMILAR POLL TAKEN IN 1968 BY GALLUP.

2. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED TO INDICATE THEIR PREFERRED SOLUTION FROM THE INTERVIEWER'S LIST. IN THE LONG RUN (OVER TWO YEARS) 54 PERCENT PREFERRED A "UNITED IRELAND" WITH

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ANOTHER 18 PERCENT IN THE "DON'T KNOW/NONE OF THESE" CATEGORY. IN THE SHORT RUN (UNDER TWO YEARS) RESPONDENTS WERE MORE EVENLY (AND INCONCLUSIVELY) DIVIDED AMONG "DON'T KNOWS" (23 PERCENT), JOINT CONTROL BY UK AND GOI (18 PERCENT), A FORM OF NORTHERN IRELAND POWER SHARING (18 PERCENT), AN INDEPENDENT NORTHERN IRELAND (16 PERCENT) AND A UNITED IRELAND (15 PERCENT). IN 1968, 47 PERCENT PREFERRED A UNITED IRELAND BUT WERE GIVEN NO CHOICE OF TIME FRAMES.

3. PARTITION. OVER HALF (58 PERCENT) OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE THE BORDER WILL GO, BUT A MAJORITY OF THESE ALSO SEE IT AS A LONG TERM PROCESS (10 YEARS OR MORE). IN 1968, THE IRISH APPEARED SLIGHTLY MORE OPTIMISTIC (68 PERCENT) ABOUT THE END OF THE PARTITION OR, CONVERSELY, LESS PESSIMISTIC (22 PERCENT VS 27 PERCENT IN 1978) THAT THE BORDER WILL REMAIN.

4. BRITISH WITHDRAWAL. AMONG THE IRISH, THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT (75 PERCENT) FOR A UK DECLARATION OF INTENT TO WITHDRAW BRITISH FORCES, 38 PERCENT FAVORING INCLUSION OF A FIXED DATE FOR WITHDRAWAL, AND 36 PERCENT FAVORING A DECLARATION OMITTING A DATE CERTAIN. (16 PERCENT FAVORED NO DECLARATION OF INTENT AND 9 PERCENT DIDN'T KNOW.)

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5. RESPONDENTS WERE ALSO ASKED TO INDICATE THEIR VIEW OF BOTH SHORT AND LONG RUN OUTCOMES IN THE EVENT THE DATE FIXED FOR UK WITHDRAWAL PASSED WITHOUT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT HAVING BEEN REACHED. IN THE SHORT RUN (UP TO TWO YEARS) POLL RESULTS WERE MIXED. A PLURALITY (28 PERCENT) FORESAW A "BREAKDOWN OF GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL CHAOS" IN NORTHERN IRELAND; 20 PERCENT AN INDEPENDENT NI WITH CATHOLIC/PROTESTANT POWER-SHARING; AND 19 PERCENT A UNITED IRELAND NEGOTIATED BY NORTH AND SOUTH. A FEW FORESAW A CIVIL WAR (10 PERCENT) A UNIONIST-DOMINATED INDEPENDENT NI (7 PERCENT) OR A UNITED IRELAND ENFORCED BY THE IRISH ARMY (7 PERCENT). IN THE LONGER RUN (OVER TWO YEARS), 40 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS FORESAW A UNITED IRELAND RESULTING FROM NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH. (THE POLL DID NOT TOUCH ON MODALITIES FOR SUCH NEGOTIATIONS, E.G., WHO WOULD REPRESENT THE NORTH.)

6. SELF-DETERMINATION: GALLUP ASKED IF THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND SHOULD BE ABLE TO DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES ABOUT UNIFICATION. 76 PERCENT AGREED, WITH 12 PERCENT OPPOSED (AND 12 PERCENT NO OPINION.) IN 1968,

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THE QUESTION WAS WHETHER UNIFICATION SHOULD BE RATI-

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FIED BY THE PEOPLE IN BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH (69 PERCENT) OR ONLY IN THE NORTH (18 PERCENT).

7. PROVISIONAL IRA. 83 PERCENT STRONGLY OPPOSED PIRA VIOLENCE, WITH 51 PERCENT HAVING "NO TIME WHATSOEVER" FOR THE PIRA, AND 32 PERCENT CONCEDING ITS IDEALISTIC OBJECTIVES BUT BELIEVING "THEIR USE OF VIOLENCE IS TOTALLY WRONG." ONLY TWO PERCENT APPROVED OF THE PIRA BECAUSE "THE PROBLEMS OF NI CANNOT BE SOLVED WITHOUT VIOLENCE."

8. A FEDERAL SOLUTION. GALLUP ASKED IF A SEPARATE NI ADMINISTRATION WITHIN AN OVERALL GOVERNMENT OF (UNIFIED) IRELAND WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. 22 PERCENT SAID YES AND 38 PERCENT MORE SAID YES IF IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO SOLVE THE NI SITUATION. HOWEVER, A CLEAR MAJORITY IN THE SOUTH OPPOSED POLITICAL GESTURES TO NORTHERN IRELAND SUCH AS WITHDRAWING THE REPUBLIC CONSTITUTION'S TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO THE SIX NORTHERN COUNTRIES (65 PERCENT TO 23 PERCENT) OR REMOVING

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THE CONSTITUTION'S BAN ON DIVORCE (58 PERCENT TO 32 PERCENT). MOREOVER, A SLIGHT MAJORITY (51 PERCENT) WERE ALSO OPPOSED TO PAYING HIGHER TAXES TO COMPENSATE FOR THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH SUBSIDIES TO NI, WHICH 59 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS SAW AS THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON NORTHERNERS WISHED TO RETAIN LINKS TO BRITAIN. IN FACT, 52 PERCENT EXPECTED THE UK TO CONTINUE SUBSIDIES TO NI FOR A PERIOD (UNSPECIFIED) AFTER UNIFICATION.

9. ATTITUDES TOWARDS NORTHERNERS. IN A SERIES OF QUESTIONS PROBING SOUTHERN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR NORTHERN COUSINS, RESPONDENTS CONCLUDED NORTHERNERS HAD MORE IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER THAN WITH SOUTHERNERS, BUT DISAGREED BY SLIGHT MARGINS THAT NORTHERNERS ARE MORE ENERGETIC OR WOULD EXERT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTROL IN A UNITED IRELAND. OF THE 25 PERCENT WHO BELIEVED NORTHERNERS WOULD "TRANSFORM" SOUTHERN LIFE IN A UNITED IRELAND, HALF SAID THIS WOULD NOT BE WELCOMED. IT MAY BE PERTINENT IN THIS CONNECTION THAT HALF THE RESPONDENTS REPORTED THEY HAD NEVER BEEN IN THE NORTH AND ANOTHER 28 PERCENT SAID THEIR LAST VISIT WAS OVER FIVE YEARS AGO.

10. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE BRITISH. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE IRISH RESPONDENTS SEEMED GENERALLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE BUT MORE EQUIVOCAL ABOUT BRITISH TROOPS IN NI. 82 PERCENT DISAGREED WITH THE STATEMENT THAT THE BRITISH ARE "INFERIOR," 79 PERCENT AGREED THE BRITISH ARE A "DECENT PEOPLE" AND 81 PERCENT WERE HAPPY TO SEE BRITONS "GET ON" IN IRELAND. THE POLLSTERS STATEMENT THAT "BRITISH SOLDIERS ARE GENERALLY CRUEL AND BRUTAL" FOUND 29 PERCENT AGREEING, 39

PERCENT DISAGREEING, AND 32 PERCENT EXPRESSING NO OPINION.

11. COMPARISONS WITH 1968 POLL. EXCEPT IN THE INSTANCES NOTED ABOVE, THE 1968 POLL IS NOT DIRECTLY COMPARABLE TO 1978, THOUGH COVERING SIMILAR SUBJECTS. WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT IN 1968 THE THEN-ANTICIPATED BRITISH AND IRISH MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMON MARKET WAS GENERALLY CITED AS THE MOST FEASIBLE MEANS OF INFLUENCING EVENTUAL UNIFICATION AND ABOLISHING THE ULSTER BORDER. IN 1978, THE IMPACT OF EC MEMBERSHIP

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WAS NOT EVEN RAISED BY THE POLLSTERS.

12. COMMENT: THE GALLUP POLL HAS A GOOD TRACK RECORD IN THE UK AND WE ASSUME COMPARABLE CARE WAS EXERCISED IN ITS REPUBLIC SAMPLINGS. WE WILL DEFER TO EMBASSY DUBLIN IN APPRAISING THE ACCURACY OF THE POLL'S CONCLUSIONS WITHIN THE REPUBLIC. AS FOR THE UK THE POLL RESULTS CLEARLY WILL NOT ALTER HMG'S POLICY. NEVERTHELESS, THE BRITISH WILL FIND SATISFACTION IN THESE INDICATIONS OF IRISH WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW SELF-DETERMINATION IN NI ON UNIFICATION (AND, BY IMPLICATION OTHER SOLUTIONS) AS WELL AS THE STRONG DISAPPROVAL OF PIRA METHODS. WE ARE AWAITING THE RESULTS OF THE COMPANION BRITISH POLL ON NI AND WILL REPORT WHEN AVAILABLE. COPIES OF THE BBC DATA BEING POUCHED DEPARTMENT (EUR/NE AND INR/DDR/RWE) AND INFO POSTS.

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